nothing wrong with those who do not participate; rather, there is some-thing unusual about those who do. All too often they are the people "nobody sent."[50]

Of course, I am overstating the case in order to underline the point, which is that the kinds of demands on time and energy required to participate politically are sufficiently severe that those willing to pay the costs come disproportionately from the ranks of those with intensely held extreme views. Given that people cannot be forced to participate, the alternative is to get the costs down.

Thus, we should give a fair hearing to proposals for newer, lower-cost forms of political participation. In particular, we need to reconsider the notion that people must be physically present, or must invest large blocks of their time. Ross Perot's talk of electronic town halls was met with derision among academics, but the possibilities offered by modern com-munications deserve investigation, if only because they may be the only practical remedies.

The standard objection to movement in this direction is that making participation easier raises its quantity but lowers its quality. People who do not invest their time and engage in deliberation will be less informed, or indeed will be badly informed, expressing their stereotypes and prejudices in low-cost participatory acts. This objection is less compelling than it might seem.

In the first place, the statistical law of large numbers works against it. Empirically, recent research on public opinion shows that however unin-formed and inconsistent individual attitudes may appear to be, in the aggregate public opinion seems to be reasonable and rational.[51] Similarly, despite periodic gay-rights initiatives and other popular attempts to deny rights to minorities, studies of direct democracy find little indication that it produces outcomes any worse than those produced by legislatures.[52]

As the various jury theorems remind us, aggregation is an enormously powerful process.[53] For example, even if we assume that an average U.S. senator has a .75 probability of being right on a particular policy question

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50. From the classic anecdote about the Chicago machine's attitude toward self-selectors, as related by Rakove (1979, p. 318).

51. See the important studies of Page and Shapiro (1992) and Stimson (1991).

52. Cronin (1989, p. 229).

53. Condorcet (1976) generally is credited with the basic result. For extensions see Grofman and Owen (1986) and Ladha (1992).